

New Jamaican Canadian Centre opens

By RON FANFAIR

Representatives from all three levels of government along with Mayor Mel Lastman and former Ontario Lieutenant-Governor Lincoln Alexander were among nearly 700 guests crammed into the spacious Jamaica Canadian Association (JCA) banquet hall last Saturday for the centre's official opening.

Lastman, along with Jamaican Cabinet Minister Colin Campbell, new International Co-operation Minister Maria Minna and JCA president Herman Stewart

cut the ribbon to declare open the spanking new facility.

"I am on Cloud Nine," declared Stewart enthusiastically, while praising the visionaries who established the association in 1962.

"You passed on the

torch to us, and tonight we are handing it over to a younger generation. This building is your legacy and we want you to appreciate and utilize this magnificent facility."

Continued Stewart: "We want you to know that this is your home away from home. Too many of our young people, especially the males, are going to the wrong centres. We want this centre to be the alternative."

Stewart, who has spearheaded the drive to refurbish the building, also announced that the JCA has signed an agreement with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) for the creation of a re-training program to help the unemployed re-enter the workforce.

He also said that the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration has acceded to his association's request to have Citizenship Court judge, Stanley Grizzle, preside at a swearing-in ceremony for new citizens at

the JCA on September 21 at 2 p.m.

Campbell, who represented Jamaican Prime Minister P.J. Patterson, congratulated the JCA on the significant achievement.

"Involvement in the political process begins with involvement in the community agenda and this effort demonstrates clearly that Jamaicans in the Diaspora are serious about taking their rightful places in the various places which have now become their homes," said Campbell, the Minister of State for Youth and Community Development.

He disclosed that the Jamaican government will launch a new technological program on January 1, 2000, which will allow residents overseas to interact with communities in Jamaica.

"As of the beginning of the new year, you will be able to access these communities via your computer instead of Air Canada," he pointed out.

"You will be able to communicate with community leaders and see ongoing projects that you may wish to get involved in."

Campbell also presented Stewart with a CD of this year's Jamaican festival songs and a rare plaque which will be placed in the centre's foyer.

The plaque, made of pewter, symbolizes 37 years of Jamaica's independence and bears the signatures of all of the country's prime ministers.

The JCA's first president Roy Williams was among five of the eight founding members who attended the gala function. Williams, who flew in from Jamaica for the event, was joined by Vi Carter, Amy Nelson, J.B. Campbell and Bromley Armstrong.

"Despite all the obstacles, we finally succeeded," declared Armstrong. "Hopefully, this centre will become a beacon of hope for our community."

See THREE on page 3



Mayor Mel Lastman joins Jamaican Minister Colin Campbell (left), Federal Minister Maria Minna and JCA President Herman Stewart in the ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the new Jamaican Canadian Centre.

Photo By RON FANFAIR